

BUTANO STATE PARK DRAFT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PARK DESCRIPTION

Butano State Park (approximately 4,630 acres) is located in western San Mateo County, approximately 25 miles south of Half Moon Bay and 30 miles north of Santa Cruz. The park is in the Santa Cruz Mountains region, within 70 miles of the major metropolitan centers of San Jose and Oakland, and within 40 miles of the city of San Francisco and heavily populated eastern San Mateo County. State Highway 1 provides primary public access.

The park's primary use area is developed in a small secluded redwood forest valley, with a network of trails that connects with the backcountry at the park's higher elevations. The backcountry terrain and vegetation varies from riparian canyons to dry rocky hillsides partially covered in coastal scrub and conifers.

The area was logged extensively in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This logging, plus private development plans, spurred acquisition of the park in 1957 to preserve some of the finest remaining stands of old growth redwoods in the southern end of their range.

PURPOSE FOR THE GENERAL PLAN

Butano State Park has been a state park for over fifty years, yet a general plan for the park has never been completed. The need for formal planning was highlighted by recent acquisitions, new potential for regional open space connections, a growing demand from the expanding California population for new recreation options and coastal access, and the opportunity to coordinate planning with several other state parks in the region. A comprehensive planning effort was initiated to create a long-term and visionary general plan that would be commensurate with the park's significance within the region as well as in the California state park system.

REGIONAL PLANNING CONTEXT

This plan was developed by California State Parks as part of a regional planning effort, along with general plans for Año Nuevo State Reserve, Año Nuevo State Park, and Big Basin Redwoods State Park. These four parks not only are in close proximity to each other, they share natural, cultural, and visitor demographic characteristics, and face similar issues. The regional characteristics and common issues were researched at the beginning of the planning process and used as a foundation for the resulting park plans. The general plan process also recognized

each park's unique assets and needs separately. The plans recognize the close relationship between California State Park units and other nearby public and private lands, and emphasize the potential for regional collaboration in resource management, recreational use, education and interpretation, and park management.

For each plan, park issues and opportunities were identified and goals and guidelines developed as part of the regional planning approach. Planning zones were created for each park to assist in shaping appropriate management strategies and projected levels of visitor use. Three Butano State Park planning zones were developed and are described in **Table ES-1**, Management Zone Matrix.

KEY ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The following are the primary planning issues addressed by the General Plan:

- **Recreation Demand and Visitor Opportunities:** California's rapidly growing population and shifting demographics have created new and increased demands for recreation facilities. Butano State Park, along with other surrounding regional open space areas, can play an important role in providing more diversified and accessible recreational activities and help serve a high regional demand for recreation in the nearby high density urban centers of the greater Bay Area.
- **Public Access and Circulation:** Butano State Park is attracting many more visitors than when it first opened in 1957. This has impacted visitor access and circulation within the park. The Entrance and Facilities Zone, in particular, can become overcrowded on busy weekends. The plan provides proposals to expand visitor capacity in the area and improve flow. The plan also encourages development of alternative transportation in and around these regional parks to reduce traffic congestion and air polluting vehicle emissions.
- **Park Planning and Management in a Regional Context:** Butano State Park is surrounded by several California state park system units as well as other open space lands and recreational lands, including the Cloverdale Coastal Ranches, Año Nuevo State Park and Reserve, Big Basin Redwoods SP, and Pigeon Point Light Station State Historic Park. Inter- and intra-agency regional management and planning will be actively sought, to enhance recreation, resource protection, education and interpretation in the area, plus increase the efficiency of maintenance and operations.
- **Wildlife and Habitat Protection:** Plant and animal species composition has shifted and populations and habitats in and around the park have declined due to past land use and current human behavior. Sensitive

species affected include the marbled murrelet, San Francisco garter snake, coho salmon, steelhead, and California red-legged frog. Conservation of the state and federally listed marbled murrelet, a sea-going bird which nests in old growth redwoods and Douglas-fir, is of high importance. Nesting habitat of this bird will be protected.

KEY PLANNING CONCEPTS AND PLAN PROPOSALS

Key General Plan concepts and proposals include:

▪ Planning Concepts

- Collaborate with other regional land management, recreation, and interpretation providers to provide integrated management, recreation, and interpretation programs and facilities.
- Connect to regional trail systems and destinations, including the California Coastal Trail.
- Minimize sensitive resource impacts while expanding recreation opportunities.
- Work with federal, state, and local agencies to provide effective and efficient regional natural resource management. For example, coordinate with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Fish and Game toward the long-term recovery and survival of the Santa Cruz Mountains marbled murrelet population.

▪ Plan Proposals

- In response to California's demographic trends, where possible, provide additional day use, picnic and camping facilities for large and small groups, indoor overnight accommodations such as cabins or yurts, RV campsites, and ADA-compliant recreational facilities.
- Improve park circulation and access for vehicles, pedestrians, equestrians, and bicycles.
- Continue to protect sensitive habitat and survey for sensitive plant and wildlife species. Implement appropriate management techniques to protect sensitive habitat and species.
- Coordinate with area partners and adjacent open space properties on regional land management, sensitive resource protection and habitat linkages, recreation, trail networks, and education and interpretation. Explore acquisitions for these same purposes as properties become available.
- Provide cultural resource interpretation at historic sites and in the visitor center.

MANAGEMENT PLANS

Some of the goals and guidelines comprising Chapter 4, Park Plan, direct the preparation of specific management plans and more detailed site investigations

subsequent to the adoption of the General Plan, including the following:

- Interpretive Prospectus and specific interpretive project plans
- Roads and Trails Management Plan
- Watershed Management Plan
- Wildfire Management Plan
- Scope of Collections Statement

Preparation and implementation of these management plans may be required before facilities development and certain management actions can take place. Additional management plans may also be prepared when determined to be necessary by the Department.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

The environmental analysis and the consideration of alternatives contained in the General Plan were prepared in conformance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirement to analyze and disclose the potential environmental effects of a proposed action. The environmental analysis is programmatic in scope and serves as a first tier EIR. Tiering is a process where a lead agency prepares a series of environmental documents, progressing from general concerns to more site-specific evaluations with the preparation of each new document. The Environmental Analysis does not contain project-specific analysis for the facilities that are considered in the General Plan but analyzes broad environmental matters and is a reference for future environmental documents that will provide more detailed information and analysis for site specific developments and projects.

The General Plan includes guidelines that direct future project-level environmental review of site-specific projects to avoid or minimize potential adverse effects to resources during construction or operations of the facilities and improvements. Specific projects would also undergo subsequent CEQA review as appropriate. Because the General Plan contains goals and guidelines that are designed to avoid or minimize potential adverse environmental effects, no significant program-level impacts were identified.